



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# LIBRARY READING IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

## III

### CLASS METHODS

---

MARGARET ASHMUN  
University of Wisconsin

---

The actual classwork may be carried on in various ways, and may cover a variety of subjects. At the beginning of the recitation, it is well to enter each pupil's record of reading, in a ledger kept for that purpose. If this is done it will be easy at any time to find out just what each student is doing, and to study his tastes and needs. After the preliminary work of taking the record is completed, the reports on reading may be made. This, as has been stated, should, as a rule, be oral. In the case of books of fiction, the pupils should be trained to avoid telling the story in a long-winded, minutely detailed way; they should not be allowed, either, to spoil the story for others by solving all the mysteries, and revealing the situations involved in the climax of the tale. Attention may more profitably be centered in the setting of the story, the characteristic problems, and purposes of the book. Sometimes, a simple outline for reports may be given, so that the speaker may follow some logical order in his talk, and not ramble confusedly, as he is likely at first to do. Lively or impressive incidents, judiciously selected, will serve to interest the hearers, and arouse in them a desire to read the same book.

If the book is not of the order of fiction, a condensed account of its contents and purpose will serve both to satisfy the teacher as to the intelligence with which it has been read, and to inform other members of the class as to its interest and value for them. Older pupils may give long and rather complete discussions of books, according to outlines prepared by themselves. Some excellent results may be obtained in this way; but the teacher must be careful not to force this method upon her classes before they are ready for it. In these oral reports, much care must be taken to lead the pupils to speak clearly and connectedly; serious mis-

takes should be corrected. Nevertheless, a great deal of tact is necessary to avoid embarrassing the speakers, and interrupting the course of their thoughts. In the earlier stages of the work, it would be wise to encourage spontaneity of expression and freedom of debate, even though a few grammatical errors should escape unremarked.

Written reports may be made occasionally, for variety's sake, and for the purpose of reaching every member of the class—a thing which cannot always be done in the oral recitation. The writing may be done according to an outline supplied by the teacher; or each pupil may be required to put at the head of his paper a brief outline of what he is planning to discuss. This precaution will help to do away with the jumbled, unorganized work which would otherwise be produced.

The written report, if carried too far, is sure to become irksome, and to destroy the pleasure which the children have taken in their reading. Especially ought a system to be condemned which demands a detailed written report of all books read. Very few grown-up people would tolerate the task of writing out an account and criticism of even the books which they have enjoyed most. The burden of such a requirement would become unendurable, and the sight of any volume nothing short of odious. How much less could an unskilled youngster brook the hardships of an ever-recurring written report! The aim of the library-reading class would be entirely unfulfilled, and a race developed, not of book-lovers, but, very justifiably, of book-haters.

Much work may be done in class beyond that of the regular reports. These may properly be omitted with varying frequency, and the time otherwise employed. Each student ought early in his course to be taught something of the usual methods of the classification of books, the meaning of library labels, and the method of finding a desired volume. Practice in looking up books on subjects in a card catalogue can scarcely be dispensed with. It is surprising to find how helpless most high-school pupils are in matters of this kind. If they are taught to make intelligent use of a library, with all the facilities which it offers, they will be equipped with a set of tools most valuable in any line of labour

which they may take up on leaving school. The teacher may give to the boys and girls short, individual lists of books to look up in the catalogue, and, where such freedom is allowed, actually to locate on the shelves. Or she may tell the pupil to make a list of all the books in the library by a certain author, as indicated in the catalogue; or she may assign the task of preparing a list of the best references on a certain subject, with some account of the contents of each book.

There is another thing which ought to be done, and which will be of assistance to every teacher in school; that is, the teaching of the use of reference books. Each student may be assigned the name of a certain reference book, upon which he is to make a complete report. This is better than the mere making of lists, as it cannot be done without an actual and thorough examination of the book in question. Many young people will be found to be ignorant of the simplest reference works; and even the best informed can be directed to volumes that will be of inestimable assistance to them in the preparation of lessons, essays, and debates.

Reports upon magazines may be made in this same way, care being taken to compare the different periodicals with a view to detecting the value or, if necessary, the worthlessness of each.

A not unprofitable element of the classwork is the selection of books for the next period of reading. A good method is to pass about in class such books as seem suited to the ages and tastes of the boys and girls, and let them read into the books for fifteen or twenty minutes, to find out whether they care to finish. After the teacher has become well acquainted with her students, she will be able to select for each one, almost unerringly, the kind of book which he likes and needs. This is an especially good method where a pupil seems aimless and uncertain in his selection, and often results in his reading a number of books along similar lines—books which he would not have known how to choose for himself. Even if he does not care to read the book handed to him in class, he becomes more or less familiar with it; and the mere certainty that it does not appeal to him forms a not unworthy part of his literary knowledge.

Browsing among books may occasionally be allowed, during the whole or part of a recitation period. The class, turned loose, with their attention, perhaps, called to a certain department of the library or a certain group of volumes, may, in the short time allotted to them, make a few permanent book-acquaintances that will guide them in later selection. Mere intelligent contact with books can do much in the way of imparting information, and creating a literary instinct; and children should be given every opportunity to meet the book-personages of the library on an agreeable footing.

Occasionally, the teacher may read aloud to the class, to entertain and interest them, or to show them the substance of some volume to which she wishes to call particular attention. This method will almost invariably result in the request for the book from which the selection has been read.

The use of pictures can be made interesting and beneficial. Portraits of authors, photographs of regions where the scenes of novels are laid, illustrations of stories and poems will help to deepen impressions and make the work more lively and acceptable to the youthful mind—which dearly loves the tangible and concrete. At all times, information on authors and their works, with incidents and anecdotes concerning them, will form an inevitable accompaniment of the ordinary topics of the recitation. The teacher will be the usual source of such collateral information, and will strive, of course, to add constant accumulations to her store of knowledge about authors and their works. When she finds that she has the sympathy of her class, she may give brief, well-planned talks on books, authors, and kindred themes, with the double purpose of imparting facts, and stimulating the interest in literary subjects.

There are other ways, which will suggest themselves as the work goes on, of varying the routine of book reports, and of making the class period a time of recreation and instruction. Ingenuity, vivacity, and a broad knowledge of books of all sorts are the teacher's surest aids in saving the work from dullness, and in making of it an actual means of culture to the pupils.